THE BOOK OF GIANTS
- THE RECONSTRUCTION - BASED ON BIBLICAL TEXTS

My earlier study "Ancient Gods and Giants" traced the biblical references to giant races and individuals in the Old Testament. This article endeavours to investigate further information on the above by looking at the fragmentary remains of the script on the Giants in the Aramaic (about 300 BC) and Manichean (about 250 AD) versions.

Aramaic is believed to be the language in general use in Israel at this time and therefore thought to be the language spoken by Jesus Christ. The fragmentary Aramaic version was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. The Manichean (also fragmentary) is believed to be by Mani, (c. 215-276) , the founder of a heretical religious sect.

Although it is important to scrutinise the two versions mentioned above, a more coherent story is to be obtained in the Book of Enoch, a version known as Enoch 1. Especially, the Book of Watchers, part of the Book of Enoch. (chapters 1-36). Enoch is one of the most intriguing characters in the Bible, as he was at the end, transported to heaven and did not die in the normal sense.

Enoch lived before the Flood and was the great great grandfather of Noah. He was clearly an object of fascination throughout the centuries and many stories and legends accreted around him. The Book of Giants enlarges on the mention in Genesis 6:4 of giants "*being on the earth at this time*."

The Book of Enoch is considered by some to be one of the pseudepigrapha collection, so called because the reputed authors employed the name of a notable figure from the past as the title head simply to impart a credence to their story which it otherwise might not have.

Probably the most arresting facet of the Book of Enoch is the allusion to the sexual intermingling of human females with (fallen) angels. The resultant offspring were the giants who oppressed humanity and taught evil. Because of the wickedness which had come upon mankind, God decided to bring about the great flood. We are told that Enoch tried to intercede with heaven on behalf of the wicked angels but was unsuccessful. The Book of Giants expands this story and recounts the exploits of the giants.

In the Book of Enoch, we read that the idea of mixing with human females was discussed and permitted by Shemihaza, the leader of the "wicked" angels, some 200 in total. The Book of Giants dilates this story, especially being concerned with the activities of the two sons of Shemihaza, Ohya and Hahya. As stated above, we have only fragments of the Book of Giants, part of which is concerned with the fateful dreams of the giants, Enoch`s attempts to interpret them and his unsuccessful efforts to plead with God for the giants.

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THE BOOK OF GIANTS ACCORDING TO THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

(We have stated that the fragments need to be reconstructed in order to achieve a more or less comprehensible narrative. The initial fragments tell of the "descent" from heaven of the rebel or "wicked" angels, who brought knowledge to mankind, but also wreaked great disruption and evil upon the earth. It is instructive to see parallel information in Genesis, 6:4. Square brackets indicate (my) presumed connecting material. Round/normal brackets indicate my comments.)

RECONSTRUCTED NARRATIVE

(There are several versions supposedly accounting for the descent of some of the angels to earth from heaven. Rebellion against the Godhead is a generic term. Details are variously ascribed: Lucifer, onetime chief of the angels, was it seems, too proud to bow down before humans, as God wished and furthermore became envious of his maker, and was for his disobedience cast out of heaven. Other angels of like mind followed, and left heaven for earth. Eventually they became known as "Fallen Angels." It does however seem as if the main reason for the "descent" was lust for the "daughters of men," which led to sexual intercourse between the (now) wicked angels and earthly women. The principal transgressors were a body of angels known as "Watchers" whose task was supposed to be to "watch" and guide the actions of humanity. Clearly, they betrayed this trust and it appears were the instigators of sexual co-mingling. One of the leaders (at this stage) of the proposed rebellion was one called Shemiraza, who was persuaded into allowing himself and about two hundred angels to adopt human form and go on this venture. It is clear from the above that pride and lust were the main driving forces of the defection. Over-weaning ambition was another. God banned these disloyal angels from heaven and eventually condemned them to an everlasting life of damnation. However, they in some measure retained their power.

The result of their "taking wives" among human females was the birth of monstrous beings and wicked giants usually known as Nephilim, In Genesis, 6.4 are the words: "*There were giants on the earth in those days*" They brought with them certain arcane knowledge but also created havoc among all earth dwellers. It is at this point that we begin with the Dead Sea Scrolls version of the Book of Giants.)

THE RECONSTRUCTION

[These fallen angels] knew the secrets of [all things]. [At this time] sin was great on the earth. The wicked angels killed many people and begot giants [with mortal women].

The wicked (former) angels [consumed] everything that the earth produced: the great fish, the birds in the sky, all the fruit of the earth, all kinds of grain , [the fruit] of the trees, [even beasts and reptiles they committed sin against] – all the creeping things of the earth: they [observed/watched all earthly things]. They performed every harsh deed with harsh utterance upon male and female creation and upon/among humanity itself.

(Two hundred angels had been persuaded to leave heaven for the earth)

The two hundred angels seized 200 hundred donkeys, 200 asses, 200 hundred sheep and rams of the flock, 200 goats, 200 beasts of the field from every animal and from every bird, [for experiments in in-breeding with humans] and all types of miscegenation.

(As a result, monsters were created among all the perversion, due to mingling animal seed with mortal women. Similar to Egyptian Gods, satyrs and possibly even dinosaurs. The historian Josephus mentions that Enoch had business in Egypt, then called Siriad)

[The monsters sought out [flesh [which would be destroyed or perverted.] Monsters and giants would arise who were lacking in true knowledge because [they were abominations]. Meantime the earth grew ever more corrupt and [the giants more] mighty. They considered [trying to persuade other angels to come upon the earth otherwise their tyranny might ultimately]

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perish and die. All the time they were causing great corruption in the earth. [If this aim] did not suffice [to perpetuate them], they would be [finally destroyed.] (they believed).

[The fallen ones] defiled all creation and begot giants and monstrous creatures, and corrupted all the earth, [which was] defiled by blood shedding, at the hands of the giants. But this did not suffice them and [they were seeking all the time] to devour/destroy many/much more. The monsters attacked [all creation.]

(The giants are now troubled with portentous dreams, and Mahway reports his dream to the rest of the giants. Apparently, he sees a tablet inscribed with several names immersed in water, which only has three names remaining when it emerges. The usual interpretation is that this symbolizes the death of all on earth except Noah and his sons. The story continues.)

[Mahway reported that men] drenched the tablet in water so that it was covered. It was then lifted out and all the inscriptions but three had vanished.

(Mahway goes to the others. They discuss the dream.)

This vision is cause for cursing and sorrow, said the group. I, said Mahway, am the one [who will be blamed most of the whole group], of those cast down out of heaven, and I shall have to go to hear the spirits of the slain complaining about their killers and crying out that we shall all die together and be made an end of, when I am sleeping [and dreaming] Bread and dwelling [will be denied me]. So, troubled with this vision, [the monsters] entered into the gathering of the giants.

Then Ohya spoke without trembling to Mahway "Who showed you all this vision, my brother?"

"Barakel, my father, was with me [as corroborator, and….it seemed experienced the same vision]

…But before Mahway had finished telling what he had seen in his dream, Ohya said to him, "Now I have heard wonders! If a barren woman gives birth (parable) – [that would be an equal wonder!]

Thereupon Ohya said to Hahya, "Are we to be destroyed upon this earth?" When they had finished discussing the dreams, both Ohya and Hahya wept before [the assembled giants and monsters.]

Use your strength, [the group counselled]. Then Ohya said to Hayha, "This doom is not for us but for Azazel (one of the wicked angels) for he [showed most corruption] to humanity) . . . They (the good angels) surely will not let all their loved ones (i.e.the giants and monsters) be neglected. We are not to be cast down. You [(addressing the crowd of giants, angels (fallen) and monsters] have strength and [can resist]"

(The giants however, realize that fighting heaven is futile)

(Gilgamesh speaks)

"I am a giant, and by my mighty strength in my arm, I can vanquish anyone mortal. I have made war with them (mortals) in the past but I am not now able to stand against my opponents who reside in heaven, and dwell in holy places. And not only this, but they are in fact stronger than I am. The day of the ravening wild beasts has come and that of the wild man [as I am known].

Then Ohya said to him." I have been forced to have a dream... The sleep of my eyes vanished so that I could see a vision. [Now I know that on the field of battle we cannot win.] Gilgamish - note!"

(Ohya describes his vision.

"I saw a tree uprooted except for three of its roots. While I was as it were watching, [some beings (good angels?)] moved all the roots into this garden [but not the three]20

(The interpretation of this dream is similar to that of the earlier one.)

"This dream vision concerns the death of our souls," said Ohya, "and those of Gilgamesh and all his companions. However, Gilgamesh said to me that [all the forebodings] concerned [only the rulers of earth, the temporal, powerful ones, whom the leader of the good angels has cursed]. The giants were glad at his words. Then [Ohya] turned and left the assembly.

(There are more dreams, the import of which is hostile to the giants. The dreamers report to the monsters and then to the giants.)

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After this, two of them had visions; they were unable to sleep and they came to their comrades and told their "dreams", to the assembly, their comrades. The monsters. They reported that in their dream they seemed to be observing a garden where "gardeners "(angels?) were watering two hundred trees and large shoots came out of their roots. [Suddenly the garden became ablaze] so that the garden was destroyed and all the water evaporated. Then they went to the giants to tell them of their dreams.

(The suggestion was made to seek out the scribe and prophet Enoch to interpret the dreams.)

Let us seek out Enoch, the noted scribe, and he will interpret for us the dream.. Thereupon Ohya declared to the giants "I too this night had another dream and behold the Ruler of Heaven came down to earth [and made an end of us]. Such is the ending of my dream". Upon hearing this, all the monster and giants grew afraid and called Mahway, (the Titan) He came to meet the giants who pleaded with him and sent him to Enoch, the scribe. They (the giants) said to him "*Go to Enoch so that he may speak to you and then return saying] you have heard his voice*". Ohya spoke to Mahway, and said to him, "He (Enoch) will listen and interpret the dreams and tell us how long we giants have to live and rule on earth."

(After a journey through the heavens Mahway sees Enoch and speaks to him of his request)

Mahway mounted up in the air as if upon strong winds, using his hands like eagle`s wings. . He left behind the inhabited world and passed over the great desert of Desolation., Enoch saw him and hailed him [Mahway told Enoch of his mission and said to him that he would speak with him.] Flying here and there Enoch came a second time to Mahway (after he, Enoch, had warned Mahway about flying too near the sun) Mahway spoke to Enoch and said that the giants and all the monsters of the earth await his words. [If the Fall of the giants/wicked angels has been carried out (by divine Providence)] from their days of heavenly glory, can you at least assure us that the number of our days spent doing harm will be added to our lives. We wish to know the meaning of the two hundred trees that came down from heaven.

(Enoch, having received Mahway`s request, tried to intercede with God but unavailingly. Accordingly, he presented Mahway with a tablet which was full of foreboding about the coming judgement, but which offered some hope for the future via repentance.)

The scribe, Enoch, gave Mahway a copy of another tablet (not the one doused in water) that bore his (Enoch`s) own handwriting. The writing on the tablet said: in the name of the great and holy God, this message is sent to, Shemihaza, and all his companions. Let it be known to you (the giants and monsters) that you will not escape judgement for all the things that you have done, and that your wives, their sons, and the wives of their sons [will not escape,] and that by your licentiousness on the earth, there has been visited upon you a heavenly judgement. The land is crying out and complaining about you and the deeds of your children and about the harm you have done to it. Until the heavenly angel *Raphael, arrives, behold, destruction is coming by a great flood which will destroy all living things, whatever is in the deserts and the seas. The meaning of the [dreams/matter is by way of a judgement] for all your evil. But if you now loosen the bonds binding you to evil and pray (for forgiveness)…. (You may be saved).

Raphael: an angel sent by God to fight against evil and especially Azazel

(Enoch it appears also saw a vision at some point. He said the following);

A great fear seized me and I fell on my face. * I heard his voice. (whose/ the angel`s?) (The text continues): He (Enoch) dwelt among human beings but he did not learn from or rely on them.

It seems possible Enoch is talking about the occasion when an angel came down to earth to summon him to heaven.

Here ends the fragmentary Book of Giants (Dead Sea Scrolls version).

It would be instructive here to look at relevant passages from The Book of Enoch, 1, especially the section on The Watchers where we are told of the corrupting influence of the Fallen Angels, giving humanity, (especially female) forbidden and arcane knowledge. Many of the women were made pregnant by the (evidently polymorphous) angels The story of the Giants is easier to follow in the Book of Enoch than in the very fragmented DSS version. Obviously much is

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lost of the latter version, beginning and end as well as throughout the narrative.

According to the Book of Enoch, (in the Watchers section), Enoch explains that the 200 trees represent the 200 hundred Watchers (the angels who betrayed their trust and that the felling of their trunks signifies their coming destruction – by fire and flood. In another part of the Book we are told that Mahway in his flight, narrowly escaped being burnt by the sun, by means of Enoch`s warning.

The three names remaining (on the tablet in the first dream reported) symbolize the destruction of all creatures except Noah and his two sons, as mentioned.

MANICHEAN VERSION (of Book of Giants)

Largely similar to the DSS version (as to be expected) but with several differing details. This Manichean version is even more fragmentary than the DSS text and the fragments are in several languages, Middle Persian, Coptic being some of them. Below I give a summary / reconstruction of the fragments to try to form a coherent narrative.

The version begins with the descent of the wicked angels to earth, because of their lust for mortal women. The angels taught forbidden secrets to the women (and men) which led eventually to the spread of wickedness upon the earth. They subjugate and murder many people. Shemihaza begets two giant sons, Ohya and Ahyah. Other giants are engendered by other fallen angels/demons, who bring ruin to all things earthly. Humankind pleads for help. The giants quarrel among themselves. Ohyah has a dream about a tablet thrown into water, that when it emerged carried three signs indicating coming destruction. His brother dreams of a garden containing some two hundred trees. Ahyah tells of a dream he had in which he saw people lamenting . The giant Mahway flying along seeking Enoch, hears his voice warning him not to fly too close to the sun. He is guided by Enoch, who interprets the dreams, which suggest impending doom for the giants. Enoch`s reply (in his own hand) is brought to the giants, which is a message of foreboding, seeming to predict a time of flood. Mahway goes again to Enoch (living in a sort of earthly paradise) to tell him everything, and then Ohya has a dream in which he ascends to heaven and sees the water of the earth consumed with fire. Ohya, Shemihaza and Mahway have a conversation and seem to refer to weapons. Ohya and Mahway fall out and fight. The giants are glad to see Enoch, (either visually or by the tablet) and promise to reform, asking for mercy. Enoch however, warns the giants/monsters they will face damnation despite their belief they would never lose their power. The angels descend from heaven and terrify the demons who take human form. The angels lead the children of the giants away to nearby towns. The two hundred demons fight an intense battle with the four angels. Ohyah and Ahyah intend to keep their promise to do battle. The four archangels bind the watchers with chains and destroy their children. It seems prisons had been prepared for them long ago. Ohyah, the monster

Leviathan, and the angel Raphael took part in a great battle. And then, “vanished!”

COMMENT

The DSS version of the Book of Giants, as we have just read, begins with the story of the descent of the disloyal angels to earth, their illicit union with mortal women, resulting in a giant and monstrous progeny. (We do not know how much is lost from the beginning; it seems likely that the fragment/s we have are not the beginning but tell of events some way into the account.) This much can be echoed in the O.T. Genesis, 4:6) Really the early story of the first giants ends here, tantalisingly, and is not taken up until later Books of the OT where further material is related concerning the various races of giants . There are many references to giants in subsequent Books, denoting abiding belief, by the writers, in their existence and power. The DSS version goes on to relate the evil deeds of the giants and monsters, on earth and humanity, leading to the wrath of God and his threatened vengeance by means of a flood. This much we also learn in Genesis, leading on to the story of Noah and his Ark. The episode we encounter in the Book of Giants, must “date”

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at about this time since we are told of the coming destruction of the giants. Because of the evil that the giants had caused (the giants being part of humanity albeit extraordinary) but maybe more so because the human race itself was given to evil and immorality as a result of being corrupted by the descended (wicked) angels, the Lord we are told decided to destroy all living things on earth. This we are also told in Genesis. The same story is told in the DSS version of the Book of Giants: there is an impending doom. It is at this point that the two accounts, Genesis and the Book of Giants, separate. In the DSS story we learn of the troublesome dreams of the giants, or some of them, that seem to show a baleful future for the giants. (This aspect is not mentioned in Genesis.) As the narrative of the Book of Giants indicates, Enoch is sought to interpret the dreams. Clearly there is much more detail about the giants in the DSS account than in Genesis.

The first five Books of the OT Bible are often reputed to be by Moses, (especially Jews).

This is not generally believed now (by other faiths). Genesis, in keeping with the rest of the Bible, has no verifiable date with regard to its writing. It probably grew over the centuries, from several sources, and by many hands. It may date from about 1000 years BC. In its first form, whatever that may have been. It is certainly well before the DSS version (of about 300 BC) and of course before the Manichean version of about 250 AD, which itself differs in several details from the DSS version.

There is much evidence of one kind or another for the existence of giant beings on the earth in earliest times. Whether one accepts this evidence or not is up to the individual. The bible itself is a collation of stories to which credence may or may not be given. Certainly much emphasis is placed on the existence of giants and the part they played in the biblical world. How the giants came into existence in the first place we are told in Genesis and the Book of Giants. That they played a large part in the early days of man and his destruction by flood is central to the allusions in the biblical/religious literature. Reading Genesis 6:4 and the subsequent verses sets the scene; the story in the Book of Giants (DSS) follows on naturally to give additional information. Unfortunately, as with the beginning of the text, the concluding sections are missing.

The final message we are left with (in both accounts) is that the (wicked) giants are vanquished, but the mystery remains: giants are mentioned AFTER the flood!

PURPOSE OF THE WRITING OF THE BOOKS OF GIANTS

One of the most important considerations to exercise modern scholarship is: why were the books written in the first place? The following matter attempts some answers. (Clearly ALL the biblical Books had some raison d`etre.!)

MANI VERSION

As we have learned, one of the accounts of giants is by Mani, brought up in a Jewish/Christian sect. As the founder of a new (heretical) religion Mani wished to attract attention by writing several “scriptures”, most now lost. The Book of Giants is/was probably his most prominent work, composed in the dominant tongue of the area, Aramaic. He wrote hoping that his doctrines would be preserved, and partly to this end, drew on other major faiths to bolster credence in him and his teachings. One of the main themes/subjects of ancient religious thought and writings was that of the existence of giants – and their battles. (Echoes of Greek mythology). As we know, reference to giant beings is (first?) made in Genesis (depending on when this was written) could be as we have remarked, about 1000 BC. Mani therefore wished among other things, to establish himself as familiar with, if not an actual authority on, ancient biblical or religious history and writings. His background-that of Jewish Christianity also motivated him to pen (Christian source) literature and to see himself as giving a warning to others of the perils of not leading a semi-Christian, moral, life. Not only this, but Mani intended his Book to illustrate ancient Iranian mythology (note Gilgamesh), since Iran was one of his main centres for proselytising. The story of the giants was therefore adapted to suit his purpose. It is clear that

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Mani based much of his material on the text we now have since the DSS discovery. Apparently, there was also a very much earlier Aramaic Book of Giants, which Mani also laid under contribution. Though these early stories of giants may be regarded as "history", Mani`s intention was to give his version a decidedly sectarian flavour. His main aim was therefore to impress and to steer aright his contemporaries.

Whether Mani himself believed in the stories of giants and their depredations is a moot point. Maybe he did, and this gives his account added moment. Fundamentally, Mani wished to inspire, impress and evangelise. I see no reason to doubt that IN HIS TIME he was successful.

DEAD SEA SCROLL VERSION

The version of the Book of Giants found (in 1947) at Qumran in Israel, is of earlier date than the Mani text, discussed above, and is generally thought to have been composed about 300 BC.

Unlike Mani`s text, which is decidedly sectarian in tone , the fragments from Qumran show no particular religious bias and appear to be (probably) a distillation of giant stories that had been around (in oral form) for a long time . Genesis basically tells a very similar story about fallen angels and the Watchers to that of the Qumran fragments. Clearly the compiler (or compilers) of the story of the giants was intent on preserving this lore for future generations. It is equally clear that legends of giants were taken seriously and their quondam existence thoroughly believed in. The Qumran Book of Giants was on a par with all the other Books discovered, and by no means to be construed as something mythological, but on the contrary was regarded with true historicity. The language of the fragment is mainly Hebrew and Aramaic.

Details differ in the two versions. Both however, agree on what might be regarded as the main feature: that some angels descended to earth who (and) were allured by the beauty of mortal women by whom they produced beings that grew up as giants. This was not the only aspect which angered the deity, but also the revealing of heavenly secrets to humanity. This story would basically account for evil upon earth and the creation of demons out of wicked angels, as a result partly of imparting arcane and forbidden knowledge (to humanity). It is clear that one of the main aims of the writer or writers, of the Qumran text is to perpetuate the account of the beginnings of earthly wickedness. Some of the sources used, are derived from Near Eastern myth, (as opposed to the Iranian of the Mani text) – as witness the name Gilgamesh, well known in Sumerian literature from the famous Epic of Gilgamesh, a very long time before. The compiler was obviously well aware of these myths/stories, and thought them worth being given a "modern" (for that time) setting.

The composition of the work rules out a Christian context (as it appears to be a BC construct). It was probably produced by a Jewish scholar who believed the story of the fate of the giants was perhaps a salutary one, defining or reinforcing the then historical context.

Perhaps in the concluding section we should attempt to put the Scrolls (or at least the writing/copying of them) in perspective/context It is generally believed that the Scrolls found at Qumran were the work of a Jewish sect called the Essenes who flourished c. 150 BC to 70 AD (when the Temple at Jersusalem was destroyed by the Romans). The dates are approximate: the sect may very well have existed before the date of 150 BC. (We still do not know much about them!) It was a time of Roman domination for the Jews and the Essenes may have tried to escape the worst aspects of the Roman persecution by fleeing to the area of the Dead Sea. Undoubtedly the underlying motive for the establishment of the sect in the desert hills was that the followers of the sect wished to practise their own brand of the Jewish faith away from the dictates of the priesthood in Jerusalem They wished to live by their own rules and principles, believing that their way was the true one. They spent much of their time in ascetism, devotion and living according to the roles and rituals laid down in their own "holy" book. It seems that much of their time also, was spent in writing - or copying ancient manuscripts: for example, all of the OT texts (except Esther).

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They clearly wished to preserve these and at the same time to put their own gloss on the stories. A central tenet of their belief was Messianic: belief in the coming of a "*righteous one.*"

Some of the scrolls (at Qumran) date from c. 400 BC (or earlier, if not written by the sect itself). Modern research suggests that the Scrolls were not all written (or copied) AT Cumran but that some were imported to place in safe hideaways, to keep them from enemies, such as the Romans, - or main-line Jewish hierarchy who might not approve of Essene interpretation. Apart from throwing light on Jewish affairs at this time, it is possible to suggest the Scrolls reflect a type of nascent Christian thought. As with the NT the Scrolls indicate a messianic expectation based on a dualistic concept of the Last Day, when Good and Evil will be weighed in the balance.

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